

REMEMBERING PEARL HARBOR

This year marks the 71st anniversary of the Japanese Attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The surprise attack killed 2,402 Americans and wounded 1,247. The tally in ships and planes lost was extensive; 6 ships were sunk, 12 damaged, 188 aircraft destroyed with a further 159 damaged. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's famous declaration that December 7th 1941 was a date which will live in infamy addressed the lack of warning from Japan. No formal declaration of war existed and negotiations were ongoing. The attack, although a decisive victory for Japan, set in motion a course of events that led to the destruction of much of Japan and a bloody dismantling of the Japanese military machine.

Relations between the United States and Japan had been less than friendly since the Japanese invasion of China in 1937 where over 200,000 people in Nanking were murdered at the hands of the Japanese military. The war in China and fear of further Japanese expansion brought western public opinion against Japan. France, the United Kingdom and the United States lent war material to the republic of China. When France fell to Nazi Germany in 1940, Japan invaded French Indochina in an effort to stop the flow of supplies to China. In turn, the United States ceased all exports of aircraft, machine tooling, parts and aviation fuel to Japan. The Japanese viewed this sanction as a hostile action and preparations for war. The planned attack would cripple the U.S. Pacific Fleet in one strike so they couldn't intervene in their grab for territory and vital resources, namely oil and rubber from the Dutch East Indies.

Despite the extensive damage to the fleet and numerous casualties at Pearl Harbor, all was not lost. The Japanese focused their attack against the battleships. This showed the Japanese adoption of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan's doctrine of 1890 in which armored battleships ruled the seas. The aircraft carriers and submarines, the very weapons used to defeat the Imperial Japanese Navy, had been spared. By the 1940s, the day of the Battleship was over.

...WITHIN OUR COLLECTION...

This 20mm, Japanese, Type 99 automatic cannon is part of the 77th Division Collection from the National Museum of the Army Reserve. The 77th Infantry Division was deployed to the Pacific Theatre during WWII. The 99 designation comes from the Japanese imperial calendar year 2599, or 1939. 20mm cannons like this one were part of the armament of fighter aircraft for the Imperial Japanese Navy and saw action in the attack on Pearl Harbor.



CCN 612785

Cannons like this were mounted inside the wings of the famous Mitsubishi A6M Zeke or Zero.

The cannon, weighing 51 pounds, comes in two parts, the barrel and the receiver.



A solenoid at the breech end was used to electronically fire the cannon. The serial number, 1158, is present.



Top view of Receiver



Aluminum sleeve at the muzzle protects both the aircraft wing and muzzle from abrasion.



A view down the barrel shows the rifling grooves.